weekly economic review

May 24, 2013

Job Vacancies

Vacancy rate holds steady

Job vacancies have stabilized at around 47,000 after trending downward since last spring. Alberta's job vacancy rate, defined as the number of job openings as a share of labour required (employed individuals plus job openings), averaged 2.5% between December 2012 and February 2013. This was unchanged from the previous reading, and remained the second highest among the provinces. The national job vacancy rate was 1.5%.

Over the same period, there were 2.1 unemployed people for every job opening in Alberta, much lower than the national average of 6.4.

Retail Sales

Retail spending dips

Alberta's retail sales pulled back in March, after two solid monthly increases. Sales were down 1.8% from the previous month, but were 4.7% above the March 2012 level. New car dealers and gasoline stations were the largest contributors to the year-over-year increases. Overall gains were tempered by declines in sales from other motor vehicle dealers (ATV, motorcycle, RV, etc.) and beer, wine & liquor stores.

Canadian retail sales were flat in March and posted a modest 1.1% increase compared with the same month last year. Lower prices were partly responsible, as the volume of sales increased at a faster rate of 1.6% year-over-year.

Employment Insurance (EI)

Fewer Albertans receiving benefits

The number of people receiving regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in Alberta continues to trend lower, declining 2.6% in March to 27,920. Initial claims fell by 2.5% in Calgary, and 0.9% in Edmonton. On a year-over-year basis, the number of EI recipients fell 9.7%. This was the 35th consecutive month of decline.

Nationally, the number of people receiving EI benefits dropped 1.0% in March to 523,700, 8.1% lower than the same month last year.

Farm Cash Receipts

Crop receipts lead strong growth

Farm cash receipts in Alberta surged by 9.3% in the first quarter compared with the same time last year, reaching a record $3.8 billion. The strong growth was led by crop receipts, which grew by 17.3% over the first quarter of 2012. Receipts from livestock and livestock products dipped by 4.8% over the same quarter last year, partially offsetting the strong gain in crop receipts.

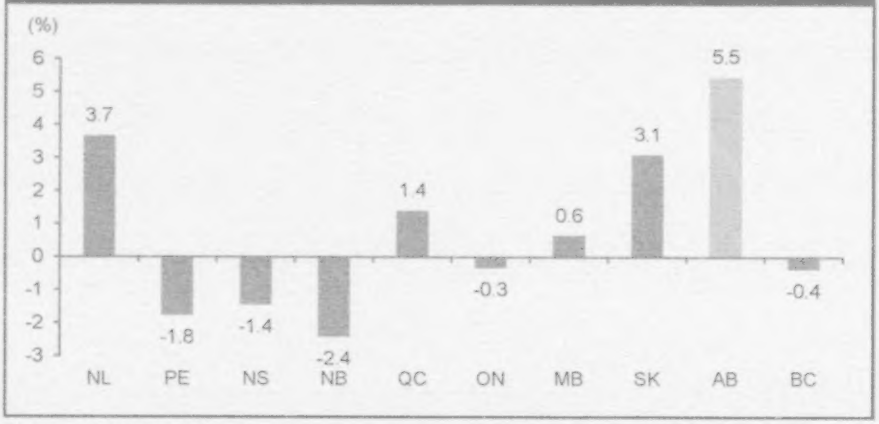
Canadian farm cash receipts also recorded strong growth in the first quarter, rising 7.5% over the first quarter of 2012.

New Housing Construction

Alberta continues strong upward trend

Investment in housing construction continues to build off exceptional growth from last year. In March, Alberta recorded the 17th straight month of year-over-year growth in the real value (adjusted for inflation) of new home construction investment (16.3%). Growth was broad-based, with all sub-sectors of new housing investment adding to investment growth.

Year-to-date retail sales growth by province



Source: Statistics Canada

Closing Price	May 16, 2013	May 23, 2013	2013-14 Fiscal YTD
Canadian Dollar (US¢/$CAN)	98.40	96.99	98.33
WTI Oil ($US/bbl)	95.16	94.25	93.42
NYMEX Natural Gas($US/MMBtu)	3.93	4.26	4.12

Alberta Economic Indicators

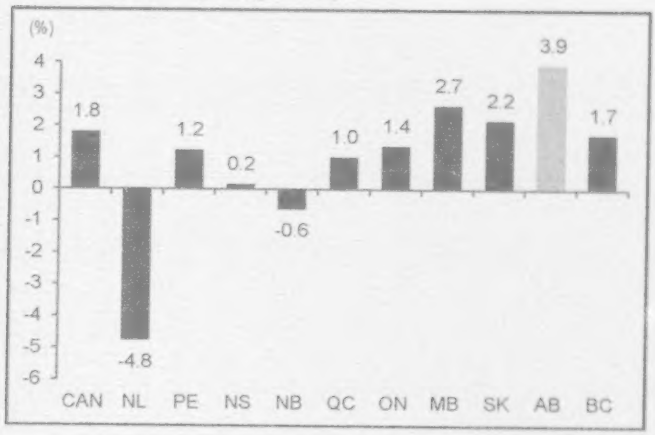
Population	2011	2012	2013YTD	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Population (000's)	3,778	3,874	3,931	..	..	3,931	..	..	..
y/y % change	1.5	2.5	3.0	..	..	3.0	..	..	..
Net Interprovincial Migration[1]	6,443	26,170	25,448	..	..	11,533	..	..	..
Net International Migration[1]	16,703	37,990	17,105	..	..	6,296	..	..	..
Net Non-permanent Residents[1]	-7,604	9,721	2,813	..	..	-1,133	..	..	..
Labour Market									
Employment (000's), SA	2,095	2,149	2,176	2,170	2,165	2,175	2,179	2,168	2,183
y/y % change	3.8	2.6	2.0	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.5	1.7	1.9
Unemployment Rate (%), SA	5.5	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.4
Participation Rate (%), SA	73.7	73.4	72.7	73.0	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.6	72.5
Average Weekly Earnings ($), SA	1,035.70	1,075.46	1,091.80	1,091.24	1,095.14	1,083.82	1,099.77	..	..
y/y % change	4.4	3.8	3.6	4.4	3.9	3.0	4.5	..	..
Price Indices									
Consumer Price Index (y/y % change)	2.4	1.1	0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.5	0.9	1.2	1.3
Excluding food and energy	0.6	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.8	1.4	1.2	0.9
Non-Res. Building Const. Price Index[2] (y/y % change)	3.4	3.8	1.4	..	3.0	..	..	1.4	..
Farm Product Price Index (y/y % change)	17.8	4.4	..	2.0	2.7	..	..	..	..
Crops	19.7	2.5	..	3.0	4.3	..	..	..	..
Livestock	17.2	5.9	..	1.3	1.4	..	..	..	..
Household Sector									
Housing Starts (SAAR, 000's)	25.5	33.3	35.1	39.9	30.2	31.0	35.3	34.8	39.2
y/y % change	-5.0	30.7	6.5	32.8	5.5	18.3	10.5	1.6	1.1
New Housing Price Index[3] (y/y % change)	0.4	1.3	2.4	1.7	1.9	2.2	2.6	2.4	..
Edmonton	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.6	..
Calgary	0.1	1.7	4.0	2.8	3.1	3.3	4.3	4.3	..
MLS Average Resale Prices ($ 000's)	352.7	362.0	375.6	370.7	372.2	367.6	380.1	380.4	374.3
y/y % change	0.5	2.6	5.1	4.2	5.2	6.8	4.5	5.9	3.4
Edmonton ($ 000's)	324.2	332.7	342.5	343.0	345.9	337.6	344.0	348.9	339.4
y/y % change	-0.7	2.6	2.7	5.3	4.4	1.6	2.8	5.4	1.0
Calgary ($ 000's)	401.9	410.8	429.3	419.3	436.0	422.5	436.7	433.9	423.9
y/y % change	1.1	2.2	7.2	3.1	8.3	12.4	5.7	6.3	4.6
NEW: Retail Sales, SA (y/y % change)	6.8	6.9	5.5	4.2	2.8	4.3	7.4	4.7	..
New Motor Vehicle Sales (y/y % change)	9.6	10.5	3.0	2.6	-0.7	3.6	6.5	-0.1	..
Consumer Bankruptcies	7029	5759	858	420	346	446	412	..	..
y/y % change	13.8	-18.1	-18.3	-27.2	-28.4	13.7	-22.7	..	..
Business Sector									
Rigs Drilling	266	250	303	268	287	368	422	306	115
y/y % change	30.4	-12.6	9.5	-21.8	16.6	-8.2	8.1	9.4	-18.2
Goods Exports, customs based (y/y % change)	18.4	1.8	1.4	-2.8	13.1	1.5	2.0	1.4	..
Energy	19.2	2.1	0.6	-1.3	16.9	1.2	4.0	0.6	..
Farm, Fishing and Intermediate Food	-27.2	20.6	5.3	6.3	20.0	3.8	6.7	5.3	..
NEW: Farm Cash Receipts (quarterly, y/y % change)	16.7	14.1	9.3	..	10.1	..	..	9.3	..
Manufacturing Shipments, SA (y/y % change)	17.3	3.4	-1.8	-8.0	-5.8	-3.0	-0.4	-2.0	..
Wholesale Trade, SA (y/y % change)	14.7	10.8	4.0	5.1	3.7	3.1	6.2	2.8	..
Building Permits, SA (y/y % change)	11.8	14.8	26.0	44.7	-5.4	24.7	19.9	38.2	..
Residential	5.2	18.2	14.9	23.3	2.2	21.2	7.8	16.2	..
Non-residential	20.9	10.7	47.1	78.4	-13.0	30.6	36.1	60.0	..
Business Bankruptcies	264	230	24	15	16	10	14	..	..
y/y % change	30.2	-12.9	-46.7	-21.1	-11.1	-50.0	-44.0	..	..

1 Quarterly, annual numbers are presented on a census year basis (July 1 – June 30)
2 Quarterly, average of Calgary and Edmonton
3 Average of Calgary and Edmonton
YTD (year-to-date) represents the change since the beginning of the year compared to the same period in the previous year. "SA" denotes seasonally adjusted. "SAAR" denotes seasonally adjusted at annual rate

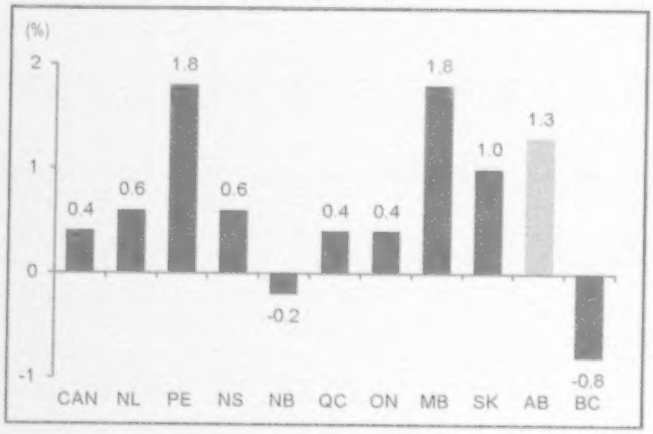
Sources: All data is from Statistics Canada except Housing Starts (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), MLS Average Resale Prices (Canada Real Estate Association), Rigs Drilling (Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors) and Bankruptcies (office of the superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada).

Economic Indicators by Province

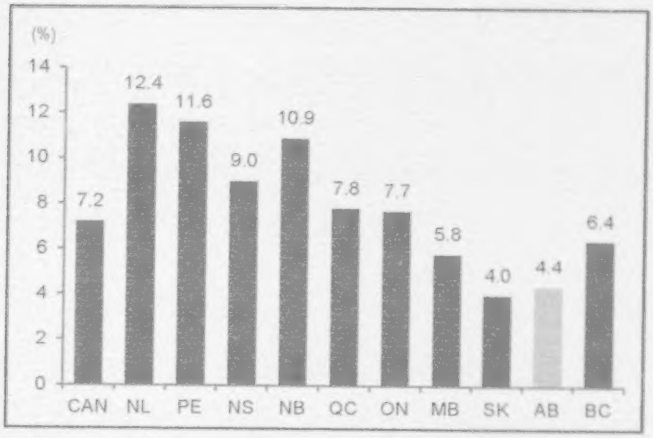
Real GDP by Industry
(2012, year-over-year growth)



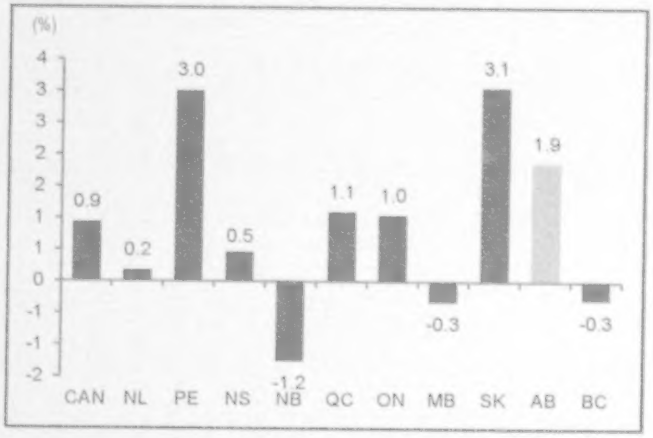
CPI Inflation
(April 2013, year-over-year growth)



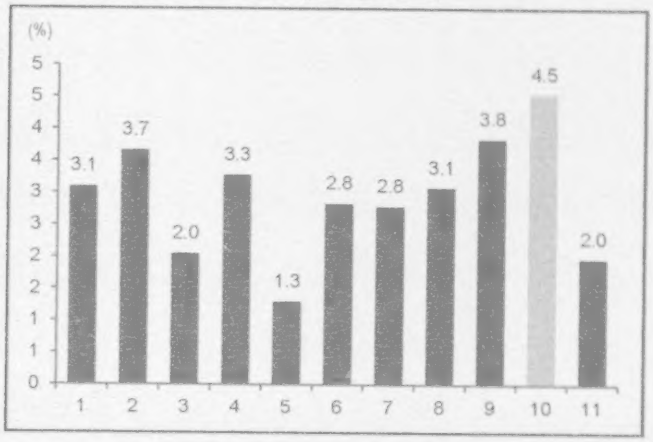
Unemployment Rate
(April 2013)



Employment
(April 2013, year-over-year growth)



Average Weekly Earnings
(February 2013, year-over-year growth)



Housing Starts
(April 2013, SAAR, year-over-year growth)